

**EPA Region 10
Seattle Community Meeting**

May 10, 2000

Asian Resource Center, Chinatown/International District

Co-sponsored by the National APA Center on Aging

Attendees:

(see list)

AGENDA:

- Opening remarks by Clayton Fong, Executive Director, NAPCA
- Introduction by Joyce Kelly, Director, EPA Region 10 Office of Civil Rights & Environmental Justice
- Introduction to White House Initiative on AAPIs, by Romulo L. Diaz, Jr., EPA Assistant Administrator
- Introductions by community representatives
- Dialogue
- Closing remarks by Romy Diaz

MEETING MINUTES (draft)

Summary: There was a good mix of attendees from state/local government, community based organizations (CBOs), and one representative from the press. The attendees were very pleased to have this opportunity to speak to a high level official from the federal government. At first, there was a hesitance to speak up, perhaps due in part to the informality of the meeting (no set agenda, just a dialogue) and because the federal representatives were not asking the questions; perhaps also because of a general lack of association between environmental and health issues. However, once the conversations started rolling, the attendees brought up several, broad issues ranging from environmental to socio-economic. People easily identified with an approach focused on education, employment, business opportunities and program delivery improvements, and they emphasized the need for government to build strong relationships/partnerships with communities and CBOs to ensure a successful initiative. The attendees also stressed the need for disaggregated data to find specific subpopulations at risk.

Specific Issues Raised by Attendees:

- South Pacific Islanders are a small but growing population in Seattle. They are currently an “invisible” group - but they want mainstream America to know they exist and they have real world issues. They want to learn about what to teach children/parents. They have a lack of awareness of

resources available -- don't know where to go for information, for help with children, for parents to learn how to live in Seattle. Some are not educated enough or qualified for jobs and need counseling, direction, and advice on how to advance. There is a high rate of dropouts, crimes, etc. This is probably the first time that Pacific Islanders have attended an Asian community meeting like this.

- < Romy recounted his personal experience as a first generation American.
- < Romy agreed to bring these issues to the attention of other federal agencies participating in the WHI. Federal agencies need to collaborate, maybe follow up on a regional meeting of federal agencies.
- < Romy noted that in the recent White House Conference on Youth, it was observed that, of those surveyed, only 1/3 of American parents thought they did not spend enough time with their children, while 2/3 of children thought parents don't spend enough time with them. Mentoring and educational support is important to bridge this gap. From a government perspective, EPA needs to reevaluate where its educational dollars are spent - \$163B are allocated to academic and research institutions.
- < Clayton explained that communities need a good economic base and the AAPI community is very diverse, but we need to be united while recognizing the unique and different needs for each subpopulation. Federal agencies need to collaborate and maybe the regions are a good place to start.
- There is a lack of awareness of contracting and grant opportunities. EJ grants are on hold - why? Most EJ grants are for health-related projects.
 - < Romy explained that EPA's operating budget is reduced as a result of Congressional earmarks. This had led to adjustments in the dollars available for EJ grants. However, Romy wants EPA to be among the first civilian agencies to collect racial data on grants and contract opportunities.
- Kids' images of people and their roles/jobs is a concern. There is a need for money in schools so kids can learn that the environment is exciting career for everyone as well as a good source of jobs. We need to attract young people into environmental careers.
- Most people think environmental issues are just a concern of the middle class (image of a white guy in REI clothing). We need to communicate that the environment is important to everyone but some people still do not associate environmental impacts with health issues. We need to link the environment directly with health.
- Language is key. EPA needs to be able to reach out to communities using the language that is

most comprehensible by subpopulations.

- < Romy explained that part of EPA's strategy is to use the Internet and other outreach tools. We would create a "one-stop shop" Web site for AAPIs, in English and other AAPI languages, that would offer resources and translated documents, and also be interactive (e.g., ask for input from communities/individuals, perhaps a cyber-conference). EPA needs to continue this dialogue to get sense of what our highest translation needs are.
- There is concern about AAPI terminology and how to refer to Pacific Islanders – the term AAPI infers that PI's are not Americans – wrong – they are some of the first Americans. Might be incorrectly perceived that PI's are second class citizens. Need for the title of White House Initiative to be more inclusive.
- Majority of AAPIs are living in the west coast -- AAPIs are not on radar screen in DC. But EPA's AAPI Issues (preliminary) document is a good start – identified some key issues, including worker safety concerns. AAPIs are the largest racial minority in Washington. AAPIs constitute 12% of Seattle, and growing. Low-income earners and people of color are disproportionately burdened/exposed to environmental toxins, especially in particular industry jobs. Encourage EPA to look to West Coast and TX and HI – growing populations, and disproportionately affected by health and environmental risks. There is a need to increase outreach. Hope this is first of continuing conversation to work together nationally.
- Government needs to disaggregate AAPI data when doing research to find subpopulations with specific needs.
 - < Romy pledged to make Initiative real. There is large amount of information available on EPA Web site where one can find information on local environmental quality. Hope to create Web site with the info on this initiative at www.epa.gov/aapi.
- How is money set aside for minority purchasing contracts? Need to break down by Standard Industrial Classification (SIC) codes.
 - < The Agency's goal is that 22% of EPA's contracting dollars be set aside for 8(a), woman-owned, and other small and disadvantaged businesses – but we also should be able to track dollars by racial and ethnic data, as well. Romy will share EPA's proposal to collect data/feedback on minority contracting.
- There is a "catch 22" in dealing with grants and contracts - there is a lack of history/experience in contracting that makes emerging businesses less competitive – it's hard to find opportunities, some agencies don't give chance if businesses don't have experience – so hard to get started. EPA should do more pilot projects/activities with local Community Based Organizations.

Contractors/grantees need to build a history; gain experience. Perhaps EPA can develop a project to help new organizations get contracts by scoring contractors higher if they subcontract with minority businesses. New idea for EPA to be involved in this. Find a pilot to create a success story. Grants at the community level are very appropriate - culturally and scientifically relevant. EPA can maintain trust and credibility by working with local Community Based Organizations.

- < Romy mentioned that EPA supports a successful Mentor-Protege program (contracting) in which there are already 20-25 partnerships. Established firms are partnered with smaller, up-and-coming firms to give them experience and credibility needed to compete successfully for contracts for themselves.
- < Romy says EPA does partner with CBOs for small grants and contracting (prime/sub).
- < Administration on Aging resource centers contracted with Minority Owned Businesses.
- Has EPA HQ delegated authority to Regional level to reach out to community? EPA needs to partner with other federal agencies to address related issues.
 - < Fish consumption was a good study. We need to educate EPA contractors to make sure they understand this is an issue tracked just like the others.
 - < Romy encouraged attendees to add their names/e-mails to sign-up sheet so we can send info on EJ grants and other relevant info.
 - < Regions have same mandate as HQ. The FC study was a successful regional project.
- It is a hard sell for EPA to make the environmental issues relevant to the community. We need good marketing – communication, translation, outreach – EPA needs to make people aware that the environment is a priority. It should reach out to AAPI communities – use statistics to explain environmental and health impacts/risks. Marketing to the community and translation are tough issues – hard to raise environmental issues in community as a priority when people have immediate life issues to deal with – need to elevate it to a level where community will rally around it. Use numbers to tell the story. EPA needs to gather accurate data, and disaggregated data. There is a need for solutions and pilot research studies. EPA can provide a clearinghouse of these studies and pilot projects to make them available for others from which to learn. WA State legislation to provide basic insurance to low income people an example of successful program.
 - < Romy noted that a clearinghouse makes sense but commended it to President’s Advisory Commission on AAPIs and the White House Initiative on AAPIs, which has great overall information collected on their web site (www.aapi.gov) – not only on what federal agencies are doing but also on communities. We were conscious of marketing issues regarding where to

conduct our site visits and which regions to partner with. We need to start looking at the regional level to engage the community on an on-going basis, rather than have you come to DC.

- What discussions has IWG had as far as next steps?
 - < Romy acknowledged the enthusiasm of employees and community – “It indicated that there was real need and sense of pride. This is not just a “flavor of the month.” He hope this stays in motion.
 - < Romy explained that EPA (like other federal agencies) are required to submit an inventory and implementation plan.
- Use EPA employees as a resource, e.g., Dr. Roseanne Lorenzana (R10), who pioneered the Fish consumption study and worked closely with local community, gained their trust and established a long-term working relationship. The fish consumption study on 10 ethnic groups is good pilot – perhaps applicable in other cities/regions.
 - < Romy agreed that employees are a good resource, but it’s not fair to rely on them to take up what is actually the responsibility of the entire agency. He would like to see it become a normal part of doing business in the agency, and would like to look at how to work a resource center. Maybe consider the models of NHEC and NTEC.
- A participant gave credit to Roseanne Lorenzana for the fish consumption study. Working with refugees, the attendee remembered the emotion when the Refugee Center got the EPA Environmental Justice grant. The community thought they were finally being listened to. The study was a good model – culturally appropriate; collaborated with UW and so had expertise for science. The Refugee Center has access to wealth of languages, and also was able to produce a survey to collect data (using bilingual data collectors). The center also served as a good conduit, and made sure that EPA was listening to each community. AAPIs are sometimes still not comfortable talking with government representatives. Some AAPIs have experiences and traumas from previous governments like in Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, etc.
- There is concern about the grants selection/award process. In the fish consumption study, the EJ grant to the Refugee Center was good, but as the study drew to a close and the center was ready to do health education piece, they had to apply for another grant and were surprised that they didn’t get it. This follow-on grant was awarded to a mainstream white organization who was going to develop a video and translate it into the Hmong language. The Refugee Center was told that their proposal wasn’t chosen because it didn’t look like the community was involved enough. Who is involved in the peer review? Are there people of color represented? How do the peer reviewers know what’s true at the ground level (i.e., the project would really benefit the community)?

- Cultural competence should be seen as an advantage. It should add weight to proposals when looking at grant applicants and contract bidders. EPA needs to ensure that peer reviews, advisory committees or other decision making bodies have AAPI participants, as well as staff to ensure cultural competence and accuracy. It is important to design RFPs or grants to make sure that considerations for cultural competence be included in the technical review.
 - < Romy explained that there is an internal committee with 25 people, there are criteria on which to base decisions on, but it's a balancing act. But HQ is not really involved enough -- this is a weakness of the program. EPA's financial opportunities are based on a level playing field, but there are still challenges. In some cases, CBOs are not so familiar with the process for proposals for grants and other financial assistance for which they are eligible. Some CBOs may not know how to write a good proposal. Romy offered to work with regions and grant offices to arrange for technical assistance workshops for AAPI groups on how the grants/contracts process works. [He provided an analogy of applying for job opportunities and writing a good resume.]
- EPA needs a tracking, evaluation system to provide an evaluation of contracts/grants which are awarded to make sure AAPIs are served. The agency need to build in success measures. Peer review boards must reflect cultural sensitivity, BUT once the money given, there should be some criteria for spending funds so as to not disproportionately burden or neglect AAPIs. EPA needs to emphasize that one community is not precluded at the expense of another, it's not that one community is being favored. The agency needs to look at whether communities being precluded and make sure the money is going toward the right things in the community.
 - < Romy noted that 95% of EPA grants are competed, but 5% out of \$4 billion are non-competitively awarded. There is pressure from Congress to compete 100% of our grants.
- The Asian Gypsy moth issue is in the news because it is affecting a "squeaky wheel" – AAPI community has to make this an issue, an environmental issue that enviros and the communities care about.
 - < Each group can't do it alone. There is the need for collaboration.
- We need to drive home the importance of this Initiative at the state and local levels. It's not unusual in WA for people of color to come together on certain issues. The challenge is in galvanizing our own communities to be heard on issues that are real for them, and take into consideration the underlying suspicion of government, and the language and cultural barriers even within AAPI community. Seattle has the largest percentage of AAPIs west of the mountains. The framework for collaboration is there, but it remains to be filled in.
- EPA also needs to institutionalize this Initiative at the staff level to ensure and maintain the Agency's

commitment to the AAPI community.

- < Romy summarized the meeting and adjourned by saying that we will continue to keep them aware of our progress in this initiative. Romy encouraged attendees to fill out the sign-up sheet.

Meeting Attendees:

EPA representatives:

Romulo L. Diaz, Jr., Assistant Administrator for Administration and
Resources Management (OARM), EPA
Joyce Kelly, Director, EPA/R10 - Office for Civil Rights & Env. Justice (OCREJ)
Cecilia Contreras, R10-OCREJ
Roseanne Lorenzana, R10-Office of Environmental Assessment
Angela Chung, R10-Office of Solid Waste
Mike Letourneau, R10-OCREJ
Laurice Jones, Special Assistant, OARM
Marla Hendriksson, Program Manager, EPA AAPI Initiative

Community representatives:

Clayton Fong, Executive Director, National Asian Pacific Center on Aging
Sung Yang, International Govt. Affairs Liaison, Commission on Trade & Economic
(representing Martha Choe, PAC member)
Cathy Lowenberg, Office of Governor Gary Locke
Michael Park, Mayor, City of Federal Way
Ticiang Diangson, Seattle Public Utilities
Matthew Nakata, representing State Representative Velma Veloria
Kristine Wong, Community Coalition for Environmental Justice
Kim Nguyen, Asian Pacific Islander Task Force on Youth
Charles Wu, King County Public Health Dept.
Connie Nakano, Refugee Federation Service Center
Miebeth Bustillos-Hutchins, Exec. Dir., Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs
Diane Narasaki, Asian Counseling & Referral Service
Jackie Jamero Berganio, Seattle/King County Public Health Dept.
Rebecca Choi, Harborview Community Service League
Wang Yung, Organization of Chinese Americans
Fred Yee, Health Care Financing Office, DHHS
Michael Chin, Resource Manager, SPS Information Technology
Florangela Davila, Seattle Times